

A  
STATEMENT OF THE TRANSACTIONS  
ON OCCASION OF THE  
EXTRAORDINARY SICKNESS  
WHICH HAS LATELY OCCURRED AT THE  
GENERAL PENITENTIARY AT MILBANK.

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BY A. COPLAND HUTCHISON,

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## ADVERTISEMENT

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As a most injurious prejudice is now prevailing among the Public regarding my professional conduct at the Penitentiary, in consequence of their very imperfect information upon the subject, I feel myself compelled, without the least loss of time, to correct this erroneous opinion.

The vindication of my character, which is at this moment suffering from a partial knowledge of the whole matter, leaves me no choice in instantly repelling the calumnies now afloat against me; and this I cannot do better, than by printing, for the use of my friends, the following letter to the Managing Committee of the above-mentioned Institution, with others explanatory of it.



# LETTER

TO

THE COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL  
PENITENTIARY, &c &c.

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*Spring Gardens, May 2, 1828.*

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE to acknowledge the intimation sent to me through your Secretary, of date 19th April, of my dismissal from the situation of Medical Superintendent of the National Penitentiary. As I have already told you that no man of liberal education or of common spirit, could submit to be treated as I had been ; and that I had retained my situation so long, merely from attachment to the institution and from the love of my profession, it was not matter either of surprise or mortification that you had put your threat, communicated to me a few days before, into execution.

In my last letter I promised to make some more ample remarks on the whole of the measures which have been of late adopted for the amelioration of the condition of the Prisoners ; and this I am the better enabled to do, from having since, seen the printed Report of the Physicians, whom you had appointed to supersede me, as it were, in my professional duties.

I propose in this letter to give an outline of the

whole case, though the greater part of it be known to some of you. My intention in being so full is for the benefit of such of you as, I am well aware, have little knowledge, far less any participation in the measures adopted ; for, besides that the real management has at all times been in the hands of two of your Members, no less than seven respectable Members have very lately resigned and as many strangers have been introduced. The statement is also for the information of the public, who have a right to know the whole circumstances and bearings of the case. But the main and beneficial purpose I have in view in this address to you, is, that it may serve as a beacon and guide to warn and direct those who, whether yourselves or others, may in future conduct the administration of an Institution which, notwithstanding the present adverse appearances, may still, under proper management, fulfil the benevolent intentions of the Legislature.

I have had frequent occasion to advert to the very singular nature of the prevailing distemper, and that from my situation in the Naval Service, it became my duty to study the history as well as the treatment of this malady. In the course of my researches I have found that, though it be termed the Sea Scurvy, there are proofs of its having taken place in common life.

Of these, I may quote one taken from a very eminent crisis in the history of Europe, as related in the Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences, when a famine occurred in France in the year 1699, in which the Scurvy is represented as one of the most remarkable calamities in Paris, caused by this deficiency of food.

It is also well authenticated by contemporary Physicians that it was known in London in former ages ; and the Official Reports from the Depôts of Prisoners of War, contain evidence of its having prevailed at Norman Cross and at Liverpool, amongst them, about twenty-four years ago. This was imputed by the medical officers of those establishments, to want of exercise and recreation, as well as a long continued course of scanty food. Some of the best authors on this disease as it prevails at sea, also attribute it, not to the salt quality of the provisions, but to the deficiency and vitiation of nutritious matter contained in the food.

Deeply impressed with these truths, I officially entered a caution against a very great proposed reduction of the food of the Prisoners, in my written communication to the Committee at that time, the 22d March, 1822.

This was paid no regard to, and the diet, as described in the printed Report of the Physicians already alluded to, was adopted.

The Physicians in their Report to the Committee, printed by order of the House of Commons, after considering and rejecting all other alleged causes, have distinctly attributed this disease to the reduced diet, which the Committee ordered in opposition to my caution ; and while the deplorable effects consequent on this decision of the Committee are to be lamented by all those who can feel for human nature, even in its lowest degradation, yet to me, professionally, it must be matter of consolation, not to



say of triumph, that the evil was foreseen, and would have been averted by the advice which I gave, if that advice had been followed. The only cause they assign, and which they assign with truth, for the exemption of a few of the Prisoners, is the better fare they had, as assistants in the Kitchen, from the more generous diet they met with in that situation.

Of all this there needs no other evidence than the correspondence on your own records and the comparison of the Table of Diet, ordered by you, with that recommended by me, also to be found on your records, nor needs there any comment but that unequivocal condemnation of your own diet, by your own Physicians.

To these Records and to that Report I refer the Legislature ; and in the face of my country and yours, not as your officer, which I no longer am, but as one of that Public to whose bar we are all amenable, and as a subject of this most blessed of all governments, which protects the weak against the strong, and justifies the fair animadversions of every member of the community on the conduct of every public man, I wash my hands of all responsibility for the late and still existing calamity, with which the convicts in the Penitentiary are afflicted, and leave it to an impartial Public to pronounce upon whom the responsibility ought to light.

These Physicians are highly commendable for the candour, truth, and judgment evinced in this part of their Report, and I have little to accuse them of, but what is imputable to those who appointed them.

One of these Gentlemen has been long and inti-



mately known to me, and highly respected by myself, and all who know him, as one possessed of literary and scientific attainments of the highest order, and equally respectable by his moral qualities. But it is well known as a lamentable truth, that in Medicine, above all other professions, the success of practitioners depends on far other qualities than those which ought to recommend them in the eye of reason; and were I not compelled by that attitude of defence into which you have forced me, I should not allege, as I now do, that this Gentleman could have had little or no experience in the treatment of this disease.

With regard to the other Gentleman, though I had not the pleasure of a previous acquaintance with him, I have never heard any thing to his disadvantage; on the contrary, I believe he stands very fair in character. But, as in the former case, I must say *Carus Plato carior Veritas*. It is no fault of his that he is a young Physician, little known as yet but as the son of the respectable ex-President of the College of Physicians; and whatever I have said of the want of practical opportunities regarding the other, applies still more strongly to him.

It would be a ridiculous piece of presumption in me to suppose, that any tenderness for my personal feelings ought to weigh a hair in matters of this moment; and if a disregard of the usages and decorums of the profession could be proved in any case to be in any way conducive to the great and paramount ends of benevolence, it would be the highest impertinence in me to raise such objections; and in this view, I should think it my duty to repress my feelings.

But suffer me to recall to your recollection how this matter stands.

On the 14th of February last, when the present malady had commenced, Sir James M'Gregor was sent for to visit the Establishment, *without my knowledge*. I understood him (from the Surgeon) to have expressed his satisfaction with the general appearance of the state of health of the prisoners ; an opinion which he has since repeated to myself personally. I ask—was Sir James enabled to perform this duty the better, by the insult which you, not he, committed on me, by his not holding any communication with me ? And how does his report accord with what is mentioned in the Physicians' Report of the Matron having stated, that great symptoms of debility had been observed by her in the course of the two preceding months ?—a remark that she ought at the time to have communicated to me, if indeed she did observe any such thing. I myself was not *forward* in attributing bad effects to your diet, lest I should appear captious ; but it is plain from the tenour of my Report of January last, that my opinion regarding the prejudicial effects of the diet established by you, remained unchanged ; for after stating that the Prisoners had not hitherto experienced any injurious effects from the reduced dietary, I go on to say, that “ if I were  
 “ asked whether I believed, that a sufficient period  
 “ had elapsed, to give the present system a fair trial  
 “ on the health of the Prisoners, my reply would  
 “ be, that I do not consider a sufficient time to have  
 “ elapsed to answer the question decidedly ; nor do  
 “ I think a shorter period than two years,\* from the

\* I have been informed from the best authority, that it was

“ commencement of the present system, to be long  
 “ enough to come to a decision on this important  
 “ subject, *unless indeed some very unexpected indispo-*  
 “ *sition were to arise among the Prisoners in the*  
 “ *mean while, of which I should give due notice to*  
 “ *the Committee, or the Visitors for the time being.*”

I will freely confess, that in using these last portentous words, I did not apprehend that their fulfilment was so near at hand, and will not assume the credit of prophesying what happened, though in less than a month this *unexpected indisposition* did actually arise. I perceived its approach, and gave official notice of it on the 8th of February, when there were but four or five individuals in whom it had clearly developed itself, having previously prescribed for these individuals lemons and lemon juice.

With what face of truth then can it be alleged, that I did not early perceive, and announce the existence of this malady? I did not give notice of it at the time I first perceived it; for I had fresh in my memory a passage in a letter of Mr. Holford's to me, (not three weeks before) in which he highly approves my not immediately making public what I observed of an illness which occurred immediately before that time, for fear, as he said, “ of spreading an alarm  
 “ which might even add to the number of the sick.” This letter, dated 22nd of January, now lies before me.

When my great difference of opinion from you, regarding the diet, occurred in March, 1822, I ex-  
 not till after more than two years confinement, that some of the prisoners of war became sensibly affected with this disease.

pressed a wish for a consultation, and gave the names of five or six of the most eminent and oldest practitioners, all distinguished by their professional and scientific merits, and all considerably older than myself: some of them were personally known to me, some of them not, and some of them had actually practised in this very rare disease. This request was denied me; but it affords a sufficient answer to what has since been alleged against me, that I felt objections to the assistance of others. Had my plan been adopted, either at that time, or on the late occasion, a very few consultations with one or more of eminence (I verily believe, without any expense to the public) would have sufficed; instead of a total supercession of my daily duties for a length of time by those you have appointed.

I must here be permitted to say, that having been twenty-four years in the active discharge of medical duties at sea, in hospitals, and private practice, I humbly conceive that it was not too much to expect some courtesy, both from yourselves and the two physicians of your own selection. They were pleased indeed to listen to such information as I had to communicate to them at the beginning of their attendance, which I did most freely and anxiously, judging that I was thereby promoting the ends of their mission. But I was soon given to understand that I must not consider myself as their associate; and after gradually declining to meet me, at last they left me out of their consultations, and they continued to act and make a Report without reference to me.



Now, Gentlemen, I must be free again to avow my suspicions, that the Physicians must have acted under your influence ; for I aver, from my knowledge of life, that no professional men of liberal sentiments, nor who understood what was due to themselves, and to the sacred and important duties in which they were engaged, would have so conducted themselves, except in virtue of instructions from their employers. And indeed on this point I can entertain no doubt, for you referred to them, exclusively, in the audicnees which you gave them ; and my prescriptions for the sick, even previously to my letter of the 8th of April, were refused to be complied with by the Surgeon, either in the medical or surgical department.

But I am far from having done with this subject. I am going unequivocally to allege, that by this want of free and confidential communication with me, and by my suggestions being disregarded, the sick have substantially suffered.

When these two Gentlemen consider dispassionately the cruel situation in which I am placed, they will require little apology for what I am about to state, as compulsory on me in my own defence.

Among the peculiarities of this disease, it is none of the least, that there has been discovered a specific remedy for it, more certain, more efficacious, more expeditious, and more safe, than has ever been discovered for any other known disease.

This was long overlooked ; not because there had not been proofs of its virtue for more than two hundred years, but probably because it was not an ex-

quisite product of human art, but a simple production of nature, namely, the juice of lemons or limes, or other form of the citric acid.

Since this has been understood, and acted upon on a great scale, the sea scurvy has been extirpated from the navy, insomuch, that in virtue of this, and some minor means of improving health, two ships of war are admitted by the best judges of the naval service to be capable of more efficient service than three in former times, by enabling ships to keep the sea for an indefinite length of time ; and more than the same proportion of expense is saved to the country, on account of the savings in the recruiting and hospital establishments, not to mention the diminution of human suffering and mortality.

I understand the objection made to my recommendation of the lemon juice on this emergency, has been the bowel complaints, which have been on this, as on other occasions, so prevalent a symptom of this malady. I affirm, on my own experience—I appeal to the experience of all those who have actually seen and practised in this disease, whether this symptom has been found any obstacle to the free use of lemon juice, qualified by such correctives as are well known to experienced practitioners. The *ripe* oranges prescribed in lieu of this, possess none of the specific virtues of the citric acid, but only those of other fresh vegetable matter.

Now I have not only verbally, when I did confer with the two Physicians, but also by letter, of date the 12th of March, urged without effect, the employment of this remedy to its fullest extent.

It is no fault of these Gentlemen, that they are younger and less experienced than I am ; it is no fault of their's that they were not obliged, by their public duties, to study and treat this disease, as I have been ; and in order to justify the animadversions made above, which at first sight may appear too severe, I am here again called upon for explanation and apology ; for it is so invidious, and so unusual in regular practice, for a professional man to object thus freely to the practice of others, that it can be justified by nothing short of the most extreme necessity. To this cruel necessity have I been driven by you.

I have at this moment my *all*, that is, my character—more dear than life to every gentleman—put in jeopardy by your public insults, and have *no other* means of defence but those I have been compelled to resort to. If in points which touch the most sensitive springs of nature, I may by any excess of feeling have been betrayed into any unbecoming expression, I crave the considerate indulgence usually allowed to those who are smarting under oppression, and the still more intolerable and irritating pangs of contumelious and contemptuous treatment, which have unhinged stronger minds than mine. It is one of the infirmities incident to our nature, and from which I confess myself not exempt, that even the consciousness of innocence cannot prevent the mind from sinking under the weight of unrefuted calumny and the privation of that respect of our fellow men, without which life itself becomes an insupportable burden. I put it to yourselves, or to



whoever else may do me the honour of perusing this letter, whether, if any one possessing the principles and feelings of a Gentleman, will place himself in the situation in which I have been for the last twelve months, exposed, not only to the slights, the detractions, the fabricated imputations on my character, but the numberless and nameless thwartings, misconstructions, and secret intrigues with which I have been harassed and insulted (and which are well known to you, Gentlemen, but which this is not the place to detail,) whether, I say, your feelings would be less acute than those I have just described?

I shall conclude what I have to say on this subject, by answering your allegations with regard to my temper, challenging you to the proof.

If you can find any human creature, out of the walls of the Penitentiary, (where I was goaded beyond human endurance) of the great number with whom I have been connected, either in business or social intercourse, who will bear evidence to the prejudice of my temper, I will not persist in contradicting you on this point of fact.—There is a saying, that a worm will turn on the foot that treads upon it—Could these Gentlemen, were they not acting under influence, lay their hands on their hearts, and say, that they have on this occasion *done as they would be done by*?

But as a matter of substantial religion and morality, I appeal to all the good and the wise—to the calm re-consideration of the Reverend Members of the Committee—to that of your Member, also a member of a Court of *Equity*, who takes a lead among

you—to all those, in fine, to whom the merits of my case are known, whether I could have said or done less, as a matter indispensably enjoined by the overpowering dictates of duty and conscience towards the public, leaving out of the question my own wrongs, which I am ready to forgive?

After all, I do not accuse you of criminal intention. I believe it was far from your intention to commit acts detrimental to the public service. On the contrary, you have consumed much time and labour in gratuitously doing your best.

What I distinctly charge upon you, the Managing Committee of the Penitentiary at Millbank (or rather your two leading Members) is, that in the exercise of a wrong judgment, you have, from hasty inadvertency, taken upon you, to the detriment of the public service, to decide upon matters not within your competency ; to tolerate a system of *espionage* ; and that you have been guilty of unmerited and unfeeling insult and injury towards myself personally, without this being in any way conducive to the public benefit.

The public will naturally enquire, and expect to be informed, from what motive or provocation this conduct of your's could proceed ; and will be disposed, *prima facie*, to impute it to some error in my conduct. I am conscious of none ; unless indeed it was an error to have differed in opinion from you regarding the diet, or to have preferred being the victim, rather than the associate, of those who were engaged in that system of secret intrigue and cabal among the officers, which in my heart I abhorred, as subversive of all liberal intercourse and every

useful result in the conduct of this or any other human affair, particularly when men of education or established character are the objects of it. And with regard to the ill will of the other officers, I can no otherwise account for it, but by supposing, that some rebukes, indispensable in the exercise of my duty, which it was always my study to express with as little offence as possible, might, nevertheless, not have been in every instance palatable. For at a particular period last year, there was an organised plot, to take away my character by an imputation of ebriety, proved to be unfounded, to the satisfaction of yourselves, the Committee.

It has been reported, that one of your Members, vehemently accused me, of having made an ungrateful return, to the polite treatment I had met with. This no doubt alludes to certain letters and notes addressed to me, in June last, and since, on occasion of the appointment of the new Physicians. That these letters and notes were couched in the most civil and friendly terms, I am ready to admit. But what am I to think of them, when I reflect, that they were in their tendency utterly at variance with the *bland* words in which they were expressed ; for had I been decoyed into an assent to the proposal made to me in June, regarding the plot against my character, I should for ever have been degraded and ruined.

And in the latter instance, the empty words of politeness were in direct opposition to the contumelious treatment which followed. And how can I consider either of them, but as examples of that affected candor and tenderness, that *Atræ loliginis*

*succus* of the Poet, which in all ages has been used as the specious mask of lurking enmity.

Before concluding, I must make a short digression upon another point.—Some of my friends have expressed their surprise, that under such ill treatment, I should not have long ago resigned my situation ; for that this left room to suspect, that for sordid ends I was compromising both my honor and my peace.

Why, they might say to me, should you frequent a place, where you were continually treading on *covert and insidious embers*, where you were surrounded on all sides with traps and pitfalls ?

In answer to this I have to say, that the first half of my attendance, that is three years and a half, was gratuitous. Like many other attendants at public Institutions, I valued most the experience to be acquired there, and I have been amply repaid by the addition I have made to my medical and chirurgical knowledge.

I may also remark in passing, that when the option was given me, whether I would accept of two or three hundred pounds per annum, merely as a compensation for my loss of time from my growing private practice, I named the smaller sum.

I felt also an interest which grew into attachment, to this infant Establishment ; and it is well known to all my friends, that I have ever enthusiastically followed my profession, as a favorite pursuit, independant of its emolument. But I had further reasons for not taking this step. Had I done so, soon after my persecutions began, and before I had discomfitted



the plot laid against my character, it would have been imputed to guilt. And had I done so on a late occasion, when you put it in my power, in order to avoid the disgrace, as you thought, of dismissal, my conduct would have been subject to the like construction. I therefore begged you to act in this on your own responsibility.

A friend also lately remarked to me, that on that Diet being adopted, to which I had objected, this ought to have produced my resignation. The obvious answer to this is, that this Diet was that of the prisoners in health, with whom I had no professional relations except the monthly inspection. Had I been controled or dictated to, with regard to the sick prisoners, I should assuredly have resigned.

It would savour of presumption were I to pretend to measure myself with either of you, by a comparison of what we have respectively done for the benefit of our fellow creatures ; but it is an ordeal from which I should not shrink.

I am willing to admit the superiority which some of you possess over me by your rank in life ; but there is a sort of superiority which my own feelings, and I hope the sympathies of mankind, will not allow me to forego nor to concede to any of you ; I mean that proud superiority which those who endure wrong possess over those who commit it.

Gentlemen,

I now bid you a final farewell, sincerely hoping, trusting, and believing, that the business you have undertaken will, from past experience, prove more

successful in future, whether in your own or other hands ; and that here, as in all other human affairs, under the superintendence of a wise and good Providence, we shall all have the satisfaction and consolation of reflecting that good may have arisen out of evil. And I pray God that this exposure may be productive of all the salutary effects which I sanguinely anticipate.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,  
Your very obedient, and very humble servant,  
A. COPLAND HUTCHISON.

P. S. Just as I had concluded this letter, my attention was drawn to an imputation, said in the public papers, to have been made by one of you, in strong terms, charging me with want of attention in the performance of my duty. If by this charge it be meant that my professional visits to the sick in the Infirmarys were less frequent than circumstances required, I boldly deny the fact ; and you, Gentlemen, know, that although my instructions directed me, under ordinary circumstances, to visit the sick but twice in the week, my general practice was to visit them three and four times within the same period, and in cases of danger or difficulty my visits have been daily ; frequently twice in the day ; nay, I have even visited a convict *three times* on the same day.

If the accusation be meant to apply to my not having earlier sounded the alarm as to the appearance of Scurvy among the Prisoners in the Infirmarys, and to my not going immediately into the Prison and examining the whole of the convicts, to ascertain the

extent to which the disease had attained, then my obvious answer to this is, that there were but four or five slight cases in all, on the 8th of February, the day on which I gave the Committee the first notice of the appearance of Scurvy, and this was only a week after I had inspected the whole of the Convicts in the Prison, when I found them, to appearance, in their usual health, with the exception of a few who continued to complain of slight colds and coughs, the remains of the indisposition which had prevailed early, and during the preceding month of January. The numbers were at this time, also, lessening in the Infirmarys, and, therefore, there was every appearance of a return to the usual state of health. The few cases of Scurvy in the Infirmarys were rapidly improving under the treatment I adopted, and matters were in this state in the middle of February, when Sir James M'Gregor visited the Institution, as before noticed.

A bowel affection now began to show itself, and to prevail among a few individuals, having in one or two instances the character of Dysentery, and which from the 14th began to be a little alarming, but in these few cases there were no appearances of Scurvy, and therefore, no connexion was supposed to exist at this time between the two diseases ; and it is somewhat singular that all the first cases of Scurvy reported by me recovered, excepting one young woman who was seized with the *ecchymosed* blotches, while labouring under the last stage of consumption, of which latter disease she died on the 21st of February.— On the 24th I hazarded an opinion to the Committee



that there might be a connexion between the bowel affection and the scurvy of the legs, which my familiarity with the disease in former years at sea, enabled me to detect much sooner, probably, than would have been the case with medical men who had not had the like experience, and I accordingly acted upon it, and the examinations *post mortem* which were permitted after the two physicians were called in, completely verified my suspicions.

Five days after the last mentioned date, my monthly inspection was again to have been made, when, most assuredly, I should have examined the legs, &c. of every convict in the Prison, with a view of ascertaining to my own satisfaction if the disease had spread ; no symptoms of such a thing, however, had ever been reported to me by either the *Matron* or *Surgeon* ; nor had I any reason to suspect it, from the appearance of the Prisoners at my last inspection ; besides, I appeal to the printed Instructions to the Officers, whether, between my monthly Inspections, it was not the resident Surgeon of the Institution who had charge of the state of health of the Prison, unless indeed my attention were called, or directed by him or any other officer, or by the visitor ; to that particular duty, (which I deny to have been the case) my more immediate duties during those intervals being, as I conceived, chiefly confined to the infirmaries. Did these officers, or any of the Committee, who were officially apprised by me of the real nature of the disease, and repeatedly addressed on the subject, up to the very day on which the two Physicians were called in, ever communicate with me on the

propriety of such a measure? If they, or any of them, will assert this, then I will admit that I have been guilty of a neglect of duty. But this cannot be asserted with truth; and it is therefore expected, that such an unfounded imputation against my character will be withdrawn. I may just add, that the greater number of my evening visits were entirely supererogatory.

A. C. H.

I might perhaps have saved the general reader the time and trouble of perusing the elaborate Statement contained in the preceding pages, and rested my vindication solely on the following Letter, and Extract, from the Member for Dorsetshire, and (nearly) Father of the House of Commons, who gives me leave to communicate them to the Public. They are unanswerably confirmatory of all those points which I mainly wish to establish.

W. MORTON PITT, *Esq. M. P.* to A. C. HUTCHISON.

DEAR SIR,

I hope you will not impute my absence from the House of Commons last night, either to a want of feeling for your painful situation, or a want of inclination to do justice to your merits.

Having been a Member of the Committee of the Penitentiary from the beginning till within these few days, I felt, on many accounts, an extreme unwillingness to be present at this discussion, more especially indeed, lest my being so present, and remaining silent, might perhaps have been presumed, though

without foundation, to have been an *acquiescence* in a disapprobation of your conduct.

Your high reputation, whilst serving at sea, as well as during the many years you held so important a station in the Naval Hospital at Deal, induced me to be most anxious for your appointment at the Penitentiary. During the whole time you have held that appointment, every part of your conduct, which has come to my knowledge, has appeared to me most correct, and nothing, which has more lately occurred, has produced any change in the esteem and respect I bear to your character.

I have often lamented the jealousies and cabals amongst the officers, which from an early period have been too prevalent in the Penitentiary; and have led to a system of malicious tale-bearing, which I have always hoped would have been more discouraged. With all the credit I am disposed to give to the Visitors, for purity of intention, and zeal in the discharge of their duties, I must consider their not having effectually crushed such a system, to have been detrimental to the discipline of the institution, and inevitably must be often injurious to deserving individuals.

The fundamental error seems to have been, that with the exception of the present newly-appointed Governor, those who have been appointed to that office have never been invested with the powers due to their situation, and necessary to maintain order and subordination. Too much detail has been undertaken by the Committee and the Visitors; and, in point of fact, the Committee have been considered

as the *governing*, instead of the *superintending* power. Under a governor, qualified by his rank in life, his habits, and firmness of character, for this station, and duly supported by the Committee, much that we have reason to deplore could scarcely have existed. That this has been my opinion, has long been known to several friends on the Committee.

I remain, with the highest esteem,

dear Sir,

your sincere friend,

and very humble Servant,

W. M. PITT.

*Dover Street, April 26, 1823.*

*Extract of a Letter from the Same to the Same,  
dated 17th June, 1822.*

“ I must now repeat what I have more than once  
“ mentioned to you, the regret I feel at the cabals,  
“ and jealousies which so much seem to prevail  
“ amongst the officers of the Penitentiary, and you  
“ know I have often admired your great prudence  
“ and discretion, whilst on the one hand you acted  
“ with civility, with kindness, and consideration to  
“ all; on the other, you avoided all intimacy or  
“ connexion with any individual. One would have  
“ imagined that such a conduct would have pre-  
“ served you from any vexation.”

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GENTLEMEN,

7, Spring Gardens, April 8, 1823.

Although my functions as Medical Superintendent of the Penitentiary have been in a manner superseded



since the expiration of the last quarter, two Gentlemen having been appointed to perform the medical duties, who I understand are required to *act and report independently of me*, I nevertheless deem it my duty, in conformity with my instructions, to continue my customary Quarterly Report.

In my frequent inspections in the prison during the last six weeks, I found the cells more clean than the persons of many of the convicts, the feet and legs of many of the male prisoners appearing, by no means, to have been properly attended to in that respect.

The deaths since the first of January up to the present period, have been seven females and twelve males.

The only important remark to be made is the breaking out of the disease commonly called sea scurvy, in the early part of February, and scorbutic dysentery, and diarrhœa, have been the chief source of mortality.

There were yesterday ninety-one patients in the infirmary, of all description of cases; of whom about eight are severely afflicted. And though the cases of scurvy are much diminished, there is still a considerable number affected with that disorder, some of which appear to be of a serious nature.

Gentlemen.—This species of scurvy is a disorder of a very singular nature, and has nothing in common with the other diseases which pass under that name. It hardly ever occurs, except at sea, so that few practitioners in common life have ever met with it.

In consequence of serving at sea for some years, and having been one of the principal medical offi-

cers of the Naval Hospital at Deal for between seven and eight years, this disease fell largely under my observation and treatment. As this made part of the duty of my public situation, I claim no merit ; and as it would ill become me to boast of my qualifications, I must refer you for my general character and competency in my profession, to those members of it to whom I am personally known ; and to the profession at large, to whom I am known by my writings. I allege further, that I received the education of a Physician, and am a Graduate in Physic, and humbly conceive, from all these circumstances, that I was not undeserving of your confidence, particularly in the present emergency ; and should have been proud and happy to have done my best for those unfortunate persons entrusted to me, had it been your pleasure.

Gentlemen.—I have only further to state, as a matter of duty to you, as well as justice to myself, that from my experience in this disease, I am well convinced, that had my recommendation regarding diet, air, and exercise, in my Reports, dated March, 1822, and subsequently, been adopted, this disease would either have been prevented, or sooner subdued.

I shall conclude by assuring you, that what I have said does in no respect proceed from any feelings of jealousy or disparagement towards the Gentlemen whom you were pleased to appoint to supersede me in this duty, but on the contrary, that I have much reason to be satisfied with their candid behaviour to me ; and I cannot but feel for Gentlemen of their

liberal character in having a task imposed on them, implying an indignity to one of their brethren. I may also add that the Surgeon during this distressing period has been indefatigable in his duties.

I have the honor to be, &c.

A. COPLAND HUTCHISON.

P. S. As it is my principle to act openly, I think it right to acquaint you that I shall send a copy of this letter to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, as I have done with my other communications to you on this subject ; as he has been pleased to send for me in order to consult me regarding the health of the Prisoners.

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*From the COMMITTEE to A. C. HUTCHISON,*

*In reply to the above.*

SIR,

*General Penitentiary, April 12th, 1823.*

YOUR letter dated the 8th instant has this day been laid before the Committee.

From the tone in which that letter is written, and from the evident indisposition on your part to hold any useful communications on subjects connected with your medical duty, with the superior officers of this Establishment, which has long been observed and regretted by us, it does not appear to us possible that your medical attendance upon the Prison can continue to go on under our superintendence, with any sort of comfort either to us or to yourself, or with any prospect of advantage to the Public. We have therefore reluctantly felt it to be our duty, to





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civilities, I must in the first place say, that this alteration was of his own seeking ; and, in the next, that there is no conceivable connection between the duties of the Chaplain and my own, and therefore, as far as the public service is concerned, it cannot be of the slightest importance to the Committee, whether we are on friendly terms, or otherwise.

In regard to the third point, it is a dry question of fact, I may say of arithmetic. I beg to inclose for the information of the Committee a comparison of the Scheme of Dietary in use before March, 1822, of that which I then proposed, and of that which the Committee adopted in June, and acted on, the 4th of July, of the same year. By this paper it is arithmetically demonstrated, that my assertion is undeniable in respect of diet ; and in regard to exercise, I have only to refer to my letters on that subject, wherein it will be found, that I, in the first place, recommended the prisoners to be made to move at a “ trot,” (the word used in my communication alluded to) when in the airing and exercise yards ;\* secondly, in my Report before quoted, 4th of October, and subsequently, to establish the point most unequivocally.

Waiting with the utmost calmness your decision,

\* I have been led to set this high value on exercise as a preventive of Scurvy, from having observed in the course of my service, and what indeed is known to every experienced officer in the Navy, namely, that what are called able seamen, that is those whose duties consist in going aloft and who are exercised in other active services, are but little subject to it, and that it is chiefly confined to landsmen, whose duties are so inactive as to admit of their indulging in habits of indolence and sloth.

which I trust will be such as shall hereafter be pronounced answerable to your high stations in the country, and to the trust which you have voluntarily undertaken to fulfil,

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen, &c. &c.

A. COPLAND HUTCHISON.

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*Report on DIETARY to the Committee.*

SIR,

*Leicester Square, 22d March, 1822.*

The Committee having done me the honour by your letter of the 18th instant, to request my opinion upon the present Prison Dietary, and the “reduction it is capable of, with a due regard to the health of the Prisoners,” I beg to submit the following observations, and scale of Dietary, for their consideration.

From the high degree of health the Prisoners have hitherto enjoyed, and the absolute state of plethora, which a great majority of them have evinced after a certain residence within the walls of the Institution, as well as the frequent occurrence of disease arising from that cause, I have no hesitation in stating, the quantum of food consumed by them to be greater than is sufficient to maintain them in robust health, with all due consideration to the bodily labour they can, by any possibility, be subjected to.

The enquiry as to what reduction their present Dietary will admit, involves some serious considerations, and can perhaps only be finally determined by the results of experience. First,—It must not be sufficiently reduced, to impair the health of the Pri-

soner, or render him unfit on emancipation to work for his own or his family's subsistence. This would be adding to the burden of the Parish to which the unfortunate man may belong, and inconsistent with that humanity, which tempers the justice of our laws. Secondly,—In considering this question, we cannot altogether take example from other Prisons or Houses of Correction ; as, in the Penitentiary, the Convict is condemned to a much longer period of imprisonment, of which, being aware, his mind will have a much greater tendency to depression ; and such exhaustion of animal spirits will be likely to terminate in disease : besides, it is obvious that a man may be very well able to subsist for a few months, a year, or possibly two years, upon a scanty allowance of food, without any apparent diminution of health or strength, but beyond this period, the powers of his constitution may not be able to sustain the trial. Thirdly.—The majority of the Prisoners sent to this Institution, will I believe be found to belong to the Metropolis—to have been early initiated into crime—and to have been more successful in their nefarious pursuits, than those sent from the various County Jails throughout the Empire, and have in consequence lived higher as to eating and drinking than the other class ; and therefore will be more subject to disease by any sudden transition from intemperance to a very small regulated diet. Again, to prove (in a physiological point of view) that a certain portion of animal food is necessary to man, we have only to examine the natural conformation of his teeth and stomach.

Considering then these circumstances, without

adverting to others that might be urged ; I should be disposed to give it as my opinion, that the Dietary for the Penitentiary should stand thus.

The daily allowance of bread to be precisely what it now is.

Gruel the same, night and morning, warm.

One quart of broth to the males as *now* made ; the same quantity to the females employed in the wash-house and laundry : to the other females one pint and a half only, during six days in the week.

Eight ounces of meat of the *same kind as they have heretofore been accustomed to*, on Sundays, with one pound of boiled potatoes, omitting broth on this day altogether, for all description of Prisoners.

As I understand that reasonable objections have arisen to the use of four formidable weapons in each kitchen, namely, the carving knives for the meat, and which have hitherto been in the hands of the convicts ; the above plan will at least obviate that danger six days in the week, and on the meat days, surely two Turnkeys, in addition to the one already in each kitchen, or as many of the patrol men may be desired by the Governor, to repair thither at the proper hour to assist in cutting up the meat, so that the knives shall not be entrusted to any but those officers, and afterwards locked up, or otherwise removed to a place of safety.

Although this be my opinion after much reflection, and some knowledge of the constitutions of convicts, during a period of nearly six years that I have been the principal medical officer of the Penitentiary, yet I consider the question as very difficult



of accurate solution, and would suggest to the Committee to take the opinion of others in the profession who may have distinguished themselves in science—such as Dr. Wollaston, Sir Gilbert Blane, Dr. Baillie, Sir Everard Home, and Mr. Cline—that the best information may be obtained on this highly important and interesting subject; and if the Committee do think proper to come to such a decision, I should recommend that the Gentlemen fixed upon be requested, in the first instance, to inspect the existing state of health of the whole convicts.

I am, Sir,  
your very obedient Servant,

A. COPLAND HUTCHISON,  
*Medical Superintendant.*

*R. Auld, Esq.*  
*Secretary to the General Penitentiary.*

In a farther answer to the letter of the <sup>12</sup>~~13~~th of April, I declined complying with the invitation of the Committee to resign, as it would have been construed into a consciousness of guilt, and therefore left them to act in this on their own responsibility. The threatened dismissal accordingly was put in execution on the 19th of April.

The information contained in these letters is all I deem *immediately* necessary for undeceiving my friends, regarding any alleged misconduct on my part in the Penitentiary, as it is my intention in due time, to *publish* the whole of the correspondence on every point alluded to in the preceding letter to the Committee of the 2d May.

THE END.



### SCHEME No. I.

First, or original Dietary, previous to 5th July, 1822.

Daily one pound and a half of bread for every male Prisoner above the age of eighteen years, and one pound for every other Prisoner. But boys under eighteen may have the full allowance of bread, if it be certified by Chaplain and Governor that their conduct has been meritorious during the week preceding.

For Breakfast.—One pint of hot gruel or porridge.

Sundays.	Six ounces of clods, stickings, or other coarse pieces of beef (without bone, and after boiling) with half a pint of the broth made therefrom.
Tuesdays.	One pound of boiled potatoes.
Thursdays.	One quart of broth for the males, and one pint for the females, thickened with Scotch barley, rice, peas, or potatoes, with the addition of cabbages, turnips, and other cheap vegetables.
Saturdays.	One pound of boiled potatoes.
Mondays.	
Wednesdays.	
Fridays.	

For Supper.—One pint of hot gruel or porridge.  
Note.—Then follow some other articles and extras to be issued on particular occasions, &c.

### SCHEME, No. II.

Dietary recommended by Medical Superintendent, as by his Letter dated 22nd March, 1822.

After shewing by practice and observation that the first Dietary was too abundant, he then made some observations on its not being too much or too suddenly lowered. He then gave with great diffidence the following, namely,  
{ "That the daily allowance of bread be pre-  
cisely what it now is."

"Gruel the same, night and morning, warm."

{ "One quart of broth to the males, as now  
made, the same quantity to the females  
employed in the washhouse and laundry.  
"The other females one pint and a half only  
during six days in the week."

"Eight ounces of meat of the same kind as they have heretofore been accustomed to on Sundays, with one pound of boiled potatoes, omitting broth on this day altogether, for every description of Prisoners."

### SCHEME, No. III.

Dietary established by Committee, and acted upon 5th July, 1822.

"In the Morning.—Three-quarters of a pound of bread, and one pint of gruel for the males, and nine ounces of bread, and three-quarters of a pint of gruel for the females.

"At Noon.—Three-quarters of a pound of bread, and one pint of soup for the males, and nine ounces of bread, and three-quarters of a pint of soup for the females.

"In the Evening.—One pint of soup for the males, and three-quarters of a pint for the females.

"The soup to be made with ox-heads, in lieu of other meat, in the proportion of one ox-head for about 100 male prisoners, and the same for about 120 female prisoners; and to be thickened with vegetables and peas, or barley alternately, either weekly or daily, as may be found most convenient."

"The Committee to substitute at their discretion potatoes for bread at the rate of one pound of potatoes for half a pound of bread."

The note affixed to Scheme No. I. applies here.

## A Comparison of the Weekly allowance of Food to a Male and Female jointly by each of the three Schemes of Diet under consideration.

### FIRST SCHEME, in use prior to 1822.

17 pounds eight ounces of bread,	} Farinaceous Food.	} Estimated to require of undressed animal food, 64 ounces.
28 pints of gruel or porridge		
14 pounds of potatoes,		
During } 48 ounces of boiled meat (free of bone)	} 12	}
Four days. } 4 pints of broth,		
On the other } 9 pints of broth		
three days } With vegetables, rice, barley and pease to improve the broth,		
Total 76 ounces for each couple, or nearly 11 ounces of animal food a day for a male and female together.		

### SECOND SCHEME, proposed by Mr. A. C. Hutchison, in March 1822.

17 pounds eight ounces of bread,	} Farinaceous Food.	} Estimated to require of undressed animal food, 20 ounces.
28 pints of gruel or porridge,		
2 pounds of potatoes,		
16 ounces of boiled meat,	} 28	}
21 pints of broth, (improved as before)		
Total 48 ounces per week for each couple, or nearly seven ounces of animal food a day, for a male and female together.		

### THIRD SCHEME, being that in present use till the late Sickness.

18 pounds six ounces of bread,	} Farinaceous Food.	} Animal food allowed to make the broth:—two ox-heads for each 220 persons; and it is ascertained that each ox-head produces of clear animal food 8 pounds on an average, but allowing another pound for animal matter contained in the bones and extracted by boiling—this gives 288 ounces among 220 persons (one ounce and one third to each person) being a weekly allowance to each couple of nearly 19 ounces of undressed animal food, or two ounces and two-thirds to each couple daily.
12 $\frac{1}{4}$ pints of gruel,		
24 $\frac{1}{2}$ pints of broth (improved as before)		

